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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IR](#) [SY](#) [KWBG](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: CODEL HASTINGS' MEETING WITH PM NETANYAHU

REF: A. TEL AVIV 101  
[1](#)B. TEL AVIV 86

Classified By: DCM Luis G. Moreno, Reason 1.4 (b) (d)

[1](#)1. (S) Summary. Representative Alcee Hastings met with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu at the Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem January 10. Their discussion covered the CODEL's meetings in the region, Iran, and the PM's views on starting negotiations with the Palestinians. Netanyahu expressed interest in Representative Hastings' meeting with Syrian President Asad. Netanyahu said his first goal is peace with the Palestinians, while stopping Iran is his second goal. The two issues are connected but he is pursuing them separately. Netanyahu complained that the Palestinians had "wasted nine months" setting preconditions for negotiations. Now it is time to "get on with it." He stressed his belief that he has the political capacity to lead the Israeli people to a final settlement with the Palestinians. President Obama and President Mubarak are ready to help, he said, the question is whether Abu Mazen "has the guts" to do it. Asked for his views on dealing with Hamas, Netanyahu said he "sees eye to eye" with the PA on this point, Israel will make peace with the PA, not Hamas. Hastings said that PA PM Fayyad had told him the Arab states have done nothing to help the PA. Netanyahu said the Arabs should help the PA return to negotiations. Netanyahu explained his view that settlements are not the real issue with the Palestinians; the PA needs to recognize Israel as the Jewish state and agree that a peace agreement would mean the end of the conflict. Israel wants real peace, and will require arrangements to ensure that there is no flow of weapons into the Palestinian state. On Iran, Netanyahu said that if Tehran gets a nuclear bomb, that would end efforts for peace. The Iranian regime's true nature has been exposed, so that Americans and Europeans now understand that it lacks legitimacy. Asked about the negotiations for the release of Shalit, Netanyahu said Hamas is mulling over Israel's offer and has not rejected it. He urged Abu Mazen to get over "stereotypes" about him and get negotiations moving. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (U) Representative Alcee Hastings (D, FL) called on Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu in the PM's private office January 10. Chief of Staff Lale Mamaux, Policy Advisor Alex Johnson, and A/DCM accompanied Hastings. Netanyahu was joined by policy advisor Ron Dermer, Israeli Embassy Counselor for Congressional Relations Daniel Meron, and an MFA notetaker.

CODEL Meetings in the Region  
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[1](#)3. (C) Representative Hastings began by thanking the Prime Minister for Israel's humanitarian assistance to Haiti. He explained that he had also visited Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt on this CODEL and had also met PM Fayyad in Ramallah. Hastings said he had a good meeting with President Asad in Syria, who was in an expansive mood. Netanyahu commented that Syria is not only transferring weapons to Hizballah in

Lebanon but is also storing weapons in Syria for future transfer. Asad, he claimed, is "not even straddling the fence" between Iran and the West; he does not want to face making a choice. Hastings said he agreed but commented that the Syrian elite is nervous about Syria's relationship with Iran. More Western visitors to Syria could help keep options open. Hastings also noted that Arabs are watching the upcoming Arab Summit in Libya, and are worried that Qadhafi may hijack it. Hastings added that Asad sees a special role for Turkey in the region. The Turks share that view, but Egyptian Foreign Minister Abul Gheit had expressed reservations about a broader role for Turkey. Observing that this is a critical time, Hastings asked Netanyahu how he could be helpful.

#### First Goal is Peace with Palestinians

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14. (S) Netanyahu said his first goal is peace, and his second is stopping Iran. The two are connected but he is pursuing them in parallel. Israel is ready to negotiate with the PA, Netanyahu stressed, noting that President Peres advocates going for an interim agreement, which Netanyahu thought could be as hard to achieve as a final status agreement. But in any case we have to get started. Netanyahu complained that the PA has "wasted" nine months. Israel removed hundreds of roadblocks and obstacles in the West Bank, the PM had delivered the Bar Ilan address accepting a demilitarized Palestinian state, and then he had imposed a temporary freeze on settlement construction. In contrast, the PA was insisting on a total freeze, even in Jerusalem. This was a new demand which the PA had set as a

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precondition for negotiations. The PA was also pushing the Goldstone Report, the implications of which was that Israel should tolerate terrorists firing from behind civilians at Israeli civilians. Israel now faces a ring of 60,000 rockets and missiles and must reserve the right to deal with them militarily if necessary.

15. (S) Netanyahu stressed that Israel and the Palestinians need to "get on with it." Netanyahu asserted that he has the capacity to lead the Israeli people to a final settlement. President Obama can help a lot by using his credibility in the Arab world. The question is whether Abu Mazen "has the guts." Hastings asked what Netanyahu thought should be done about Hamas. Netanyahu replied that this was one issue on which he saw "eye to eye" with the PA. Israel will make peace with the PA in the West Bank and do nothing to engage Hamas. The time has come to stop negotiating about negotiations and get the PA into the tent. The problem is that the Palestinians have become used to the idea that they can stay out and get more.

16. (S) Hastings noted that he had asked the Algerians and Moroccans what they had done to help Abu Mazen. He said he asked PM Fayyad about Arab support and Fayyad said the Arab states had done nothing to help the PA. Netanyahu said the best thing the Arabs could do was to back the PA's entry into negotiations. In response to Hastings' comment that he had heard complaints about Israeli settlements everywhere he went, Netanyahu claimed that settlements were not the issue, since they would be addressed in negotiations and only covered three percent of the West Bank. The real issue is that there were attacks on Israel (or the Jewish Yishuv in Palestine) for fifty years before 1967.

17. (S) Saying that the time had come to "tell the truth," Netanyahu said his message to Abu Mazen and Fayyad was they need to tell him they will accept Israel within "peace borders." They must recognize Israel as the Jewish state. Hamas has a clear position, they want to drive Israel into the sea. The PA needs to say equally clearly that a final settlement will mean the end of the conflict. Israelis need to know that the conflict will be over when Israel leaves the

West Bank. This is a huge issue, Netanyahu insisted, with eighty percent of Israelis supporting his position. The PA leadership "lacks the guts to say it's over," he reiterated, noting that he wants to see the Palestinian Sadat or King Hussein. The other issue is security. What arrangements will be put in place to ensure that weapons will not flow into the Palestinian state? There will have to be solid arrangements on the ground before Israel can withdraw. Israelis want a real peace, not a fake peace.

¶18. (S) Netanyahu summarized his position as get negotiations started without preconditions. Everything will be open for negotiation, but the approach should not be set in advance, i.e. there could be a mutual decision to reach an interim agreement if that would be more achievable. A deal is possible on the Israeli side, Netanyahu said, adding that if he reached an agreement with the Palestinians, he would bring the Israeli public along with him. President Mubarak and President Obama are ready to help, but we need the Palestinians to get started. Netanyahu said he values Mubarak's leadership, but Abu Mazen needs to show similar leadership. Netanyahu said they could get peace moving if the Palestinian leadership would "get over" their stereotypes about him and about Israel.

Iran

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¶19. (C) The PM restated his well-known view that a nuclear Iran would mean the end of chances for peace. Netanyahu said that with the possible exception of Syria, the Arabs agree with him on this point. The Iranian regime has shown its true nature by using "goon squads" against their own people. Well-meaning Americans and Europeans now see the Iranian regime for what it is, deeply unpopular. Representative Hastings said he had told President Asad that it had been a mistake for Iran to reject a visit by Senator Kerry.

Shalit Deal

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¶10. (C) Noting that he realized how difficult this issue was, Representative Hastings asked whether there was any positive movement toward a prisoner exchange with Hamas and the release of Gilad Shalit. Netanyahu replied that Israel had received a video tape in return for the release of 20 women prisoners, and therefore established that Shalit was in "decent shape." Hamas still needs to respond to Israel's response to their demands. Netanyahu commented that one of the Palestinian gunmen who murdered a rabbi a few weeks ago

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had been released by Israel in the 2008 deal with Hizballah. The PM said he did not want those released to kill again. The GOI wants to bring Shalit home, but they need to know that the deal they make will not jeopardize more lives. Netanyahu said there has been no response from Hamas for three weeks. That is a good sign that they are mulling over Israel's offer and have not rejected it.

¶11. (U) CODEL Hastings did not clear this cable.

CUNNINGHAM